NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered at Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 420. Price, Five Cents.

DOCTOR QUARTZ'S LAST PLAY

OR A HAND WITH A ROYAL FLUSH

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

"How are you, gentlemen? Glad to see you," said Nick Carter. "Quartz is in the next room. Some of you knock this thing to pieces and let me out!"

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Dr. Quartz's Last Play;

OR,

A HAND WITH A ROYAL FLUSH.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

NICK CARTER IS UP AGAINST IT.

"And so, my dear—my very dear Mr. Carter, you see that at last you are up against it."

"So it would seem, from appearances," replied Nick, grimly.

For once in his life Nick Carter had been taken literally off his guard.

It seems almost preposterous—it certainly seemed so to him—that he, with all his experiences with Dr. Quartz, should have neglected even for one moment that precaution for which he was famous among his brethren and of which he was justly proud, but like the weasel which once slept for a moment and was caught, so he had closed his eyes to the fund of resource possessed by Dr. Quartz and his followers, and he was caught.

The scene of this incident was a strange one, and it was unprecedented in the history of the detective and certainly in that of any other man.

Picture, if you can, an old barn situated just outside the border of a thriving population. Conceive that once upon a time that barn was a magnificent structure of its kind but had now fallen into ruin, one-half of it beyond repair and the remaining half, or, perhaps, only a quarter of it really, turned to the uses of a human habitation.

One poor old man had occupied it. He had lived the

life of a hermit, and had made his living by manufacturing excellent representations of Uncle Sam's half and quarter dollars. In other words, he had been a counterfeiter.

And then, on an evil day for him, he had fallen in with Dr. Crystal, and ultimately with Quartz himself, and his life had paid the penalty.

But to return to the scene before us.

In that room at one end of the old barn, in the middle of it, a man was seated in a chair which was itself upon a table. Dangling from the ridgepole of the structure was a rope, and the noose at the end of that rope was around the neck of a man—a man whose wrists were double-ironed, but who, nevertheless, was now smiling pleasantly down upon the remainder of the scene.

That man was Dr. Crystal, and he had been placed in the chair and the rope adjusted around his neck by Nick Carter.

But the scene had changed since that episode, for now Nick Carter was stretched upon the floor in front of the table, and there were two ropes around his body, pinioning his arms to his sides as tightly as if they had grown there.

Those ropes which held him so securely, were lassoes.

The twining, twisting, coiling loops of them had flown in silently through the open door, and had dropped over the head of the detective like the coils of a python before the detective was aware of their presence at all; and the other ends of them had been jerked by no gentle hands, had dragged him to the floor with his arms rendered utterly useless, and had pulled upon him from opposite directions, holding him there as certainly as the fallen steer is held impotently upon the ground by the same means on the plains of the West.

Nick Carter's only companion in that incident, Price, a prison guard from Dannemora, had fallen at the same moment, and he was also pinioned and helpless; but the weapon used against him was an entirely different one, although no less certain in its effect.

You have read how the Indians of Patagonia once used a strange sort of weapon made by fastening two stones at either end of a long cord, and how they would catch the fleetest horse or the strongest of wild animals by flinging that unique weapon so that the center of the cord would strike its mark and the weight of the stones would wind it round and round the victim.

That was the sort of weapon used in this case, save that a ball of lead had been attached to each end of the cord, and that their weight had wound the cord so swiftly that one of the leaden balls had struck Price on the temple and he was now unconscious on the floor.

Now add to the picture still other figures.

At either side of the room, two men holding tightly the ends of the ropes which compelled Nick Carter to helplessness. Four other dusky figures, also in the background, but even in that dim light, unmistakably of East Indian origin; one of them caressing with tender touch a long and slender cord he held in his hands—the cord of the professional strangler; another, moving restlessly on his feet and now and then reaching inside the folds of a cloak he wore over his shoulders, in order to thrust back out of sight the head of a serpent which protruded itself unwelcome, upon the scene—plainly a Hindu snake charmer; another, turbaned after the manner of his kind, standing as motionless as a statue, with his arms folded and his head thrown back as if he resented the fact that he was in such company, but was inevitably drawn there by his thirst for human blood—a Hindu fanatic; and the fourth, a small, squat, brown man, who stooped at the shoulders, which were almost as broad as his body was long, and who kept his little beady eyes fixed upon poor Price—plainly, this was the Patagonian native who had thrown the strange weapon already described.

And now, still two more figures.

In the foreground, looking down with smiling eyes and beaming countenance upon Nick Carter and with the fingers of his right hand toying with his watch chain, was Dr. Quartz.

Beside him stood Zanoni.

Over in one corner of the place was a long box which looked as if it might serve for a coffin, and inside that box was the body of the old man who had

once lived the life of a hermit in that room. Near the box was a small iron safe with the door swinging open—the safe which had served to hold the spurious money he made solely for his own uses.

On the other side of the room a cabinet, with the doors thrown ajar, disclosing a curious collection of stones gathered from the roadside throughout the neighborhood.*

It was Dr. Quartz who made the remark with which this chapter opened, and it was Nick Carter who replied to him, for the detective was unhurt—he was merely helpless.

"Would you like me to tell you how it all happened so opportunely, Carter?" continued Dr. Quartz.

"I am always interested in your affairs, doctor," returned Nick.

"Too deeply interested for your own good, as the present scene proves, my detective friend."

"You should say, as it seems to prove," smiled Nick.

"Ah! well, we need not argue the point at present. The fact is that you are on the floor in front of me, my prisoner, and that you don't know how it happened."

"Oh, yes, I do. It happened because I forgot myself for a moment. I assure you, doctor, that if I had turned in time to discover your presence here, I should not have hesitated to fight your whole outfit; your cowboys, your snake charmer, your strangler, your knife thrower and your Patagonian."

"You forgot to mention me."

"Did I? That is because you would not have counted in the *mêlée*, for I should have shot you first."

"And I?" said Zanoni, speaking, for the first time.

"You?" replied Nick. "Well, even though you are a woman, I think I should have selected you for the second place on the program."

"Let me see if I can go over the incidents of the day for you, Carter," said Quartz, in the musing tone of one who is dealing with a reminiscence. "At sunrise you arrive in front of this place accompanied by the prison guard, Price; you are dressed as wandering geologists; you sit outside at the edge of the road hammering on old rock; enter upon the scene a man whom you suppose to be old Malgar who once lived here, but who is now dead and lying in yonder box; instead of being that old man, however, the man who accosted you was Crystal, cleverly made up; you had never seen the old man, and you had seen very little of Crystal, so it is excusable that you were deceived, eh?

"The supposed old man was, however, not deceived; he did not recognize you or your companion, but he suspected you to be detectives; he came to me; I suggested a very pleasing surprise for you—that little trap known as the hangman's noose, and it would have caught you both as surely as you are alive had you not succeeded in gaining admittance to the room before, and disarranging it; I also wrote a letter which I instructed Crystal to give to you should our plans go wrong in any detail and should he be so unfortunate as to be captured by you, assuring him that I would rescue him, no matter what the obstacles.

"And then, I collected this little band around me with all speed, for I wished to do the thing properly, if at all. Some of them were a trifle late in arriving, which fact rendered me late upon this particular part of the scene. You were in fact hanging, or were threatening to hang, Dr. Crystal when I arrived.

"My friends and I drew as nearly as possible to the door and watched the proceedings with great interest, and we were on the point of interfering when you actually strung Crystal up for a moment; but you did not stand in the correct attitude for my men to attack you as I wished them to do, so I held them back—and, besides, I have been hung once myself, and I wished Crystal to realize something of what I suffered then.

"Next, Crystal offered to betray me. You did not believe him, of course; I never thought you would. But you did exactly what I wanted you to do—you read the letter I had written.

"It sounded true, didn't it, Carter?"

"I will offer you the compliment to say that it did," replied Nick.

"Did you believe it?"

"No; I thought it worth investigation, however."

*See No. 419 for the preceding history of this scene.

"And you had gone as far with Crystal in the hanging matter as you dared to, eh?"

"As far as I cared to, yes."

"Well, you know the rest. It was while you were reading the letter that you stood in the right position for my men to step near enough to throw the ropes; it was the reading of the letter which threw you for a moment off your guard; it was really the letter that caught you, after all."

"Yes; it was the letter."

"And now, Carter, do you know what I propose to do with you?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"I will tell you. You remember, long ago in Kansas City, I told you of an island far out in the Pacific Ocean which I had fitted up as a huge laboratory where I proposed, after I had secured specimens and subjects enough, to retire and enjoy the pleasures and profits of vivisection. Carter, I am ready now to go there. I am going to take you with me, and I shall, when we arrive there, dissect you alive."

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

The scene changes.

An entire week has elapsed since the incidents recorded in the preceding chapter, and we find ourselves now in the private study, or "den" as he called it, of Nick Carter's house in the city of New York.

But the great detective is not there; he has not been there for eight days—and not a word of any kind has been received from him.

There are present in the study, Nick Carter's assistants—Chick, Patsy and Ten-Ichi.

Not until four days after the disappearance of the detective did Chick admit to his brother assistants that he was concerned about him; but that he had felt considerable anxiety over the prolonged absence of his chief and friend, he did not deny to himself.

But at the end of the fourth day he called the others around him and told them that the time had come when they must admit to one another that their chief had met with some misfortune, and the moment had arrived when they must drop everything else and devote their energies to finding him.

Nick had departed without leaving any word whatever of his errand. He had taken with him a man named Price, once a guard at Dannemora prison, who had also disappeared, and hence it was almost a certainty that Nick Carter was either dead, or was detained somewhere against his will.

An interview with the inspector at the central office had disclosed the fact that Nick had gone in search of Zanoni and Dr. Crystal, and an interview with the warden of Dannemora had revealed that the escaped Quartz was also an object of his search.

Hence, the conclusion was inevitable that the detective had found them and that in some way they had captured him instead of being captured by him, and that they had either killed him and his companion, Price, or had disposed of him in some other way; so this scene, which opens the chapter, was called for a final discussion of the matter before each of them should start out on his own idea in the conduct of the search.

"It is my opinion, lads," said Chick, who had now, in the absence of his chief, taken the lead of affairs, "that we should conduct this search together, to the end. I know perfectly well that you will consent to it if I insist upon it, for you will obey me; but this matter is so vitally serious to all of us that if there is a dissenting opinion, I wish that opinion followed out by the one who presents it. Now, Ten-Ichi, what have you discovered in tracing the escape of Zanoni from the hospital?"

"I found the driver of the hack which took her away from there," replied Ten-Ichi.

"And what did you discover from him?"

"Merely that a man—who was, of course, Crystal—engaged his services that night, told him frankly that he wished to take a patient away from the hospital who was held there against her will, and offered to pay him well for the job.

"He said that the man talked so plausibly about the wrong that had been done the beautiful young woman

that he finally consented to act, and that since he had learned that the patient was none other than the great female criminal, Zanoni, he had been so frightened because of the possible consequences to himself, that he had kept silent."

"What happened at the hospital when he went there to get her?"

"He said the man went to the door and knocked, shortly after twelve o'clock that night. When the watchman opened the door, he stepped inside, and, after about ten or fifteen minutes, he appeared again, and that a woman, arrayed only in her night robes, was with him. That Crystal wrapped a cloak around her, which he had left on the doorstep for the purpose, and then picked her up in his arms and carried her to the hack."

"And from there, where did they go?"

"Way out on the Boston Road, in the Bronx, to a house where some people named Burgoyne are living. The two disappeared in the house, and that is all the hackman knew of the case."

"What did the Burgoynes know about it?"

"Their story was almost the same as the hackman's. Crystal had bribed them to help him by drawing a harrowing picture of a wrong done to his young and beautiful wife; he told them that he had made all arrangements to steal her from the hospital, and bought the privilege of bringing her there for one day only, in order that he might have time to procure her trunks and provide her with proper clothing."

"What did they say of Zanoni herself?"

"They did not see her at all. That was part of the agreement. Crystal took her to the room set apart for her. The small trunk which contained the apparel she needed had arrived in the afternoon. Crystal left her there, and in the morning came for her, and they drove away. That is all they could say."

"What else have you to report?"

"Nothing else. That is all I have been able to determine The trail is lost, so far as I am concerned, at the door of the house where the Burgoynes live."

"Now, Patsy, what have you got to report?"

"Mighty little, Chick. I have spent the whole time, since I started out, in and around the prison, but it wasn't full of news."

"Nevertheless, tell me all you did find."

"Quartz has been an exemplary prisoner of late. He has done nothing which was not calculated to win the regard of the guards, and you know they go always upon what a prisoner does while he is with them and not upon what he did to bring him there."

"Sure."

"He was a little finicky about the time and the days he took his exercise, but they made nothing of that."

"Did he have visitors?"

"Only one."

"Who was that?"

"He was described to me as a man who looked like a foreigner. He was very dark, and had very black, expressive eyes. Tall and slender, and from what they said I imagine he was an East Indian"

"More than likely. How often was he there?"

"Twice."

"And he was permitted to converse with Quartz?"

"Both times, in the presence of the warden."

"Did he hear all that was said?"

"Everything."

"And what was said?"

"Nothing more than mere commonplaces. They talked of Quartz's health more than anything else. In fact, it would appear as if the meetings were for nothing at all; simply to give each of them the pleasure of seeing the other."

"They spoke no words in a foreign language?"

"Not a word. Permission to do so was asked, and refused."

"Then you can rest assured that the two had some other means of exchanging confidences."

"There isn't a doubt of it."

"There is an alphabet of the body sometimes used by great criminals who are smart enough to acquire it. It is said to be extremely difficult, but I know something about it. Did the warden say anything at all about the conduct of the man who called upon Quartz?"

"Merely that he was the most nervous and uneasy mortal he had ever seen."

"Ah! Now we have it. He kept moving his arms about, I suppose, patted his chest, wagged his head, shuffled his feet, got up and sat down again and did all sorts of things like that?"

"You have described it almost exactly as the warden did."

"Patsy, he was talking with his hands and arms, his feet, legs and body. The talking he did with his tongue was for the warden's ears."

"Sure thing. I see it now."

"Was Quartz uneasy, too?"

"The warden didn't say so."

"Then they chose not to risk too much. The real talking was all on one side and consisted merely of a set of instructions to Quartz. I see it all now. What more did you find out there?"

"Not another blessed thing. I went into the prison as a convict for a day, but learned nothing. I talked with the guards; they knew nothing save that Quartz had been an ideal prisoner up to the hour of his escape."

"Never made them the slightest trouble, eh?"

"Never."

"And doctored them if there happened to be anything the matter with them."

"Sure; and did it so well that they praise him for it to a man."

"Oh, there is no doubt that he is a great doctor. What did they have to say about the escape itself?"

"They thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world. Not one of them can give a single idea of how it happened."

"Did you talk with the three guards who were with Price that day?"

"Yes."

"What do they say about it?"

"Merely that Price, Quartz and the stranger who looked like a minister were standing together not far away, talking, when there seemed to be a mist roll down upon them. They grouped their men together and waited, and when the mist raised, there was Price, unconscious on the ground, and the other two had vanished."

"What do they say about Price?"

"They are sure now, that he has disappeared, that he was in the deal."

"Does the warden think so, too?"

"He did until I told him that Price was with our chief. He changed his mind when he heard that."

"Did you go to Price's house?"

"Sure."

"Did you pick up anything there worth considering?"

"Not a blessed thing on earth. I've given you all I know, Chick. Everything—and it is mighty little."

"Oh, I don't know. You have both done very well. Now, if you will listen, I will tell you what I did in that neighborhood."

CHAPTER III.

FOOTPRINTS ON THE FLOOR.

"When I entered this room the day Nick went away, I discovered on the table here, two or three rough attempts at a draft. They were done in pencil," said Chick, "and had evidently not been good enough to suit the man who made them, and had been cast aside.

"I figured that the man who made those drafts was Price, and that he had done it at Nick's request; so I studied the drawings.

"They were not difficult, and both began at Dannemora prison, and showed merely roads leading from there in one direction.

"The prominent feature of the drawings was an old barn, marked as such on the drafts, almost at the corner of the crossroads where Quartz escaped. That was why I selected that end of the search for mine."

"And you discovered the barn," said Ten-Ichi. "I saw what was found there in the paper."

"Yes; I found it, and if you have seen the papers since that day, you know something of what I discovered, although not all.

"There was the corpse of the old man who had lived there, in the box; there was the hangman's noose

with the table and the empty chair under it. It wasn't a pleasant scene which I ran in upon there, I can tell you, and it gave me almost a touch of the shivers, for my first thought was that the rope and noose had been used for Nick.

"But I reasoned that such an idea was nonsense, for, if that had been the case, they would have left his body there for me to find. In fact, the entire scene gave me courage, particularly after I had investigated it a little further, for I came away from there assured in my own mind that our chief is still alive."

"Well, go on," said Patsy, all impatience.

"The floor of that old room was covered in places with dust almost an inch deep. I don't believe it has been swept or cleaned at all, ever.

"All around those parts of the room where its occupant was in the habit of passing to and fro, the dust was worn away or dispelled, of course, but along the sides of the room, where he had no occasion to go, and in the corners, the dust had accumulated as I have described.

"In that dust, lads, there were many tracks. Some of them were obliterated by others, and it was difficult to read anything from them at all; but I did succeed in reading something, as you shall hear.

"I could not take impressions of those footmarks, but I could make drawings of them, and you know I can handle the pencil when I have occasion to do so."

"I wish I could do it half as well," said Patsy.

"I made a separate picture of every floormark I found there; those pictures I put in my pocket and brought home with me, and continued at that time with my investigation."

"Tell us about the footmarks, first."

"Well, Nick has one pair of shoes with rubber soles which he especially likes to wear. I remembered hearing him say only a day or two before that, that he had torn the sole of one of the shoes a trifle, so that it made a lump under his foot when he walked. There was one track there in that old barn which might have been made by a shoe in that condition, and I thought immediately that if that pair of shoes was gone from among Nick's, it was made by him."

"And were those shoes missing, here at home?"

"They were. Nick was positively in that barn. Of course, I never had an idea that he was not there, but now I know he was there."

"That's something, anyhow," commented Patsy.

"You're right it is," said Ten-Ichi.

"There was a print, or, in fact, several prints of a woman's shoe there, too."

"Zanoni!" exclaimed Ten-Ichi.

"Without a doubt, Zanoni. Now do you remember what a small and delicate foot for so large a man, Quartz has?"

"Yes. Yes."

"And that he wore his shoes very pointed at the toes?"

"I remember it," said Patsy.

"I discovered just such a footprint, and I am satisfied that it was made by Quartz."

"What else?"

"Well, that is as far as I can go in determining who made the footprints in that dust, but when I tell you that I discovered evidence that there had been no less than nine persons in that room, and probably more, you will understand that it means something, and that our chief did not fall a victim to small odds."

"You didn't have to find footprints to tell me that," said Patsy, indignantly. "I could have told you without going near the blamed old barn that there were a dozen there if they got him. Sure!"

"Was there anything more?" asked Ten-Ichi.

"Yes. this," replied Chick; and he took from his pocket a gold locket which Nick always wore on his chain.

"Look at it," said Chick, and he passed it to them.

Patsy studied it for a moment and then passed it to Ten-Ichi.

"I don't see anything particular about it except that it belonged to him," he said.

"I do," said Ten-Ichi.

"What?" asked Chick.

"Why, that it was unclasped from the chain and not torn off."

"Exactly," said Chick; "and what do you read from that fact?"

"That the chief left it there purposely for one of us to find, to tell us that he had been there."

"Good! That is exactly what that locket means; but it means one more thing."

"What is that?"

"That he had no expectation of immediate danger to his life; it means that he will resort to every opportunity to drop a hint or a clew somewhere, so that one of us will find it, and that finally those clews he drops along the road to where they have taken him, will inevitably lead us to him."

"By Jove, Chick, that's bully! I hadn't thought of that," cried Patsy.

"I discovered one other thing there which I do not understand, and which we must somehow decipher together," continued Chick.

"What was that?" they exclaimed together.

"There were marks on the floor which showed where a body had been dragged across it. It was probably Nick's, but he was dragged in such a manner that I am almost positive it was done by a rope and not by a man's hands. I know that his feet were free, and I suspect that his hands were also, although it seems evident that his arms were held at his sides so that he was helpless."

"How in blazes do you get at that?" asked Patsy.

"There were no footmarks there which would indicate that a man did the dragging by pulling him along with his arms, and, besides, if he had done that, and Nick's feet were free, as I know by the marks they were, he would have leaped to his feet. Moreover, the marks show that he was jerked suddenly and violently, rather than dragged. In short, I should say that a man with a rope or a lasso around his body, pinioning his arms to his sides, suddenly pulled in a certain direction, would have left just such a mark as was there."

"Then you think he was lassoed?"

"I think that is the manner in which he was caught. But that is not all. I started out by saying that there was something I did not understand."

"So you did."

"At the point to which he was dragged across the floor, in the dust on that floor, he had managed somehow to write a single word."

Patsy and Ten-Ichi leaped to their feet in excitement.

"What was it?" they exclaimed in a breath.

"That is just what I cannot determine, for the word was afterward almost obliterated."

Patsy swore something under his breath.

"What did you make of it?" asked Ten-Ichi.

"Two letters only, and they were quite far apart. One was the letter P—a capital letter, the other was the letter f—a small letter. That there had been other letters between them, we are of course certain, but I have no means of determining that there were letters after the f."

"Maybe he didn't make them at all. Perhaps they were there all the while, and the dragging of his body across the floor is what obliterated them," suggested Patsy.

"No; I know that he made them, for that letter P was as plainly his handwriting as if he had made it here on this table with his pencil."

"He meant to tell you something by that, Chick, and it was rubbed out."

"Certainly."

"Did you find anything else there, Chick?"

"Yes; I found the footprints of two men in soft earth in several places around the barn. I found where those two men had dug an opening under the foundation of the old ruined part of it and had evidently made an entrance to that room in that manner, and since I have satisfied myself what shoes Nick wore that day, I know that one of those men was he, and there is no doubt that the other was Price."

"Good!" was Patsy's comment.

"There is another point," continued Chick. "Finding those footprints outside and having decided that Price was one of the men who made them, enabled me to identify the marks he might have made on the dust of the floor inside."

"Sure."

"There were no such marks inside the barn."

"Then where was he? You didn't find his body anywhere there, did you?"

"No, although I searched everywhere, even following the tunnel which Nick and Price dug under the barn, and finally entering the room by the same means they employed. Price's body was not there."

"Well, what do you make of all that?"

"Simply that Price was unconscious, that is all. If he had been dead they would have left him there, but being alive, they had other uses for him, and so took him away as they did our chief. And now the question is, where did they take them? That is what we have got to determine, and that is what Nick will help us to do, whenever he has an opportunity to drop a sign."

CHAPTER IV.

WORKING OUT THE PROBLEM.

The reader will have perceived how correctly Chick had succeeded in reading the signs discovered by him around the old barn, and how thoroughly he had worked.

But at that point, the points given in the two preceding chapters, their information ended.

Chick had been unable to discover a sign near the old barn which could give him any idea of the direction taken by the party which had made the great detective a prisoner.

Still, all three assistants found consolation in the fact that he had left that place, at least, alive, and probably uninjured.

But where had they taken him? In what possible place could they hope to hide and keep—if, indeed, they intended to keep him at all—such a man as Nick Carter?

And then, there were those letters; "P" and "f" with the space between them. What did they indicate?

Plainly that Nick had received some intimation of the destination intended for him, and that he had sought to convey that information to them.

"What do you suppose that word was?" asked Patsy, who had been sitting in a brown study ever since Chick's concluding remark.

"I will confess," replied Chick, "that I have studied over it in vain ever since the moment I discovered those letters."

"It must have been a word, and a single word," suggested Ten-Ichi.

"Certainly."

"Then I suggest that we take the dictionary—there are two, and I think three, here in the house. I will begin with 'Pa,' you, Patsy, with 'Pe,' and you, Chick, with 'Pi,' and we will write down every word we find in each of our lists, which contains an 'f.' Afterward, we will compare our lists and discuss the matter again. What do you say?"

"Splendid. We can get through all the vowels quickly in that manner. Let us begin at once."

The dictionaries were brought and the work began.

It proceeded silently for several moments, and Ten-Ichi had worked his way through all of "Pab" and had got well down among the "C's," when he looked up suddenly and remarked in a quiet tone:

"I have found the word."

"Found the word itself, do you mean?" asked Chick.

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean; and I wonder that we did not all guess it at once."

"What is it? Don't keep us waiting."

"Pacific. That is the word."

"Of course," remarked Chick.

"Does the word mean anything else to you?" asked Ten-Ichi.

"Not at this moment."

"Do you remember that time in Kansas City, during the investigation of the freight car mystery, a boast which Dr. Quartz made to our chief?"

"No; I don't think he ever told me about it."

"Why, he boasted that somewhere out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean he had pre-empted an island to which some day he intended to retire, when he had secured a sufficient number of good subjects for his purposes, and that there he intended to enjoy his greatest passion—vivisection, the practice of dissecting live bodies."

"I remember it," said Patsy.

"That is the place to which he has taken our chief, my friends."

"And he has had seven days' start of us," murmured Chick.

"He is already on the Pacific Coast, even if he has not sailed before this."

"There is a chance, though, and we'll take it," said Chick. "Run, Patsy, to the telegraph office. Telegraph to the chief of police of every coast city out there from which a vessel can possibly sail. Never mind the number of words. Describe the party as best you can, and ask that any such party be held for further particulars. Sign the inspector's name. He will approve, and we do not want to spare the time to communicate with him now. After you have done that, go and report to him and ask him to give us every aid in his power. Then return here. While you are gone, Ten-Ichi and I will get everything in readiness, for we must take the first train. There is where our trail lies now; I am sure of it."

Patsy was off like a shot.

"We'll travel light, Ten-Ichi," said Chick. "Just fix up a couple of grips for you and Patsy. We won't monkey with disguises on this trip. If we need any at all, we will manufacture them when we want them."

Everything was soon in readiness, and they returned to the study to await the return of Patsy.

"The natural objective point which Quartz would select would be San Francisco," said Chick, as they seated themselves again, "but there is a possibility that he might choose Portland, or even Tacoma or Seattle."

"Or he might go south on the coast of California," suggested Ten-Ichi.

"Everything is possible, even probable, in a case of this kind. We must leave nothing uncovered. I will ask you to go to Portland, and from there to the other two ports—or there are three, I believe. I'll send Patsy South. I'll take 'Frisco myself."

"Yes; you should do that."

"We can arrange the details on the way out. Heaven knows it will take us long enough to get there."

"Something may be accomplished by Patsy's wire."

"True; but I hardly think so."

"And after we get there, if we discover no trace at all—what then?"

"We will not cross any bridges until we come to them, lad."

"But suppose we do find that he has sailed from one port or another—of course, he would have a yacht of his own, for no steamer would put him off at a deserted island."

"He wouldn't sail for any port at all; he would sail for the island."

"Yes; but he would have to clear for some port, under the maratime law."

"But he wouldn't go there."

"Of course not."

"He would make directly for his island."

"Yes; that is just what I was about to ask you Suppose we find that he has sailed—suppose we secure proof positive that it was his party which sailed and that our chief is of that party, what are we to do then?"

"God knows," replied Chick, sadly.

"Can we purchase a yacht and scour the whole Pacific Ocean?"

"We can purchase the yacht all right, but the ocean is another matter."

"Can't we make use of the time while Patsy is gone in studying the charts of the Pacific? There is an entire set of them in the library."

"We can do better. We can take them with us and study them on the way out. Pack them together, Ten-Ichi. Peter can take them to the train for us."

"Have you the command of sufficient money for all this, Chick, because you know that I——"

"Thank you, Ten-Ichi, yes. I will call upon you if I need any, but I have my own bank account, and I can draw upon Nick's if necessary. There won't be any lack of funds on this excursion, not if it costs us a million dollars—or even two millions."

"You know, Chick, I did not know how much you had of your own, or that you could draw upon his account."

"I know, Ten-Ichi, and I thank you. But I have the privilege of drawing on Nick's account to the last

dollar he has in the world, at any time, and I have always had it ever since I have been of age. There is nothing he owns which is not mine at all times. It has always been so. I know that with the immense fortune at your disposal through your father, you would be glad to fit out this expedition, but Nick would prefer that his own funds be used since they are at hand to use."

The charts were brought out and packed, and Peter was sent away with them to the station.

"If only my country was not at war," said Ten-Ichi.

"What then?" asked Chick.

"My father would order out the whole navy to search for our friend, for he is Nick Carter's friend also."

"I have sometimes wondered that you are not over there at the front, Ten-Ichi," said Chick. "Pardon me for mentioning it, but knowing your courage as I do, I have sometimes wondered, as I say."

"I can tell you in a word. Because my father has ordered me to remain here. When he speaks, I know nothing but obedience, no matter what my own feelings may be."

"I am glad you have told me this."

"You did not doubt me, Chick?"

"Never, my lad, never."

"You cannot know how I have suffered, compelled against my wishes to remain here when I am positive that I could do so much good there."

"I am sure of it."

"But my father's will is the law. In my own case, it is the will of his love, for he loves me. I am here by his orders, just as I might be at the front at his orders. It is the same."

"Here is Patsy," said Chick, rising as the door opened, and looking at his watch. "We have thirty-five minutes—ample time—in which to catch the train. Come.

"Well, Patsy, tell us what you did," he added, when they were upon the street.

"The wires are hot with it," replied Patsy. "In addition to all I sent, the inspector has sent out additional messages, and has promised to keep us posted along the line."

"He knows our route?"

"I told him what train we would take, and we are likely to find a message from him at any point on the way."

"Good. And what does he think about it all?"

"He agrees with us that we are on the right track, but thinks that we will have to search the whole Pacific Ocean. He hasn't much hopes of success."

"Did he suggest anything?"

"Yes; that all three of us make direct for San Francisco. He is positive that that will be, or, rather, was, the objective point of Quartz. And while we are on the way, he will have the detective force out there working for us, so if we learn nothing on the way, it is more than likely that some news will be waiting for us when we arrive."

CHAPTER V.

A LOST ISLAND IN THE PACIFIC.

We need not dwell upon that impatient trip across the continent.

The days consumed in making it seemed almost endless, but they came to an end at last, and the three assistants found themselves in the city of the Golden Gate.

More than that; when they stepped from the cars to the station platform, they were approached by a short, thickset man who had more of the appearance of a preacher than of a detective officer, which, in fact, he was.

"I am sure I make no mistake," he said, politely. "This is Mr. Chickering Carter."

"Correct," replied Chick. "I hope you have news for us."

"I am afraid that I haven't very good news, Mr. Carter."

"Whatever it is, let me hear it at once."

"The party you seek sailed from this port on the fifth, which was the day before your telegrams poured

in upon us, so you see they had at least twenty-four hours' start."

"Yes. Was any effort made to overtake them?"

"Assuredly. Every effort."

"What was done?"

"We have a very efficient police boat here, and she is very fast and also entirely seaworthy. She was sent in pursuit at once."

"And what of her?"

"She has not yet returned."

"What! Not returned after having been gone a week almost?"

"No; she has not returned, nor has she been heard from."

"That is strange," said Chick. "Do you suppose she could have fallen in with that fiend of a Quartz, and —but that is preposterous."

"We think that an accident has hapened to her machinery. Two ocean-going tugs have been sent to look for her."

"Was anything else done in the way of sending out searching parties for the craft we are after?"

"Yes; the telegram from New York told us to spare no expense no matter what it might be, so our chief chartered the yacht *Vampire*, which happened to be lying in the harbor. She returned yesterday, but with no news."

"Is she fleet, and fast, and strong, and can she carry a gun or two?"

"Yes, to all your questions."

"And is she still for charter?"

"Yes."

"I want her—I want her in the morning, or as soon as she can be provisioned and made ready for the longest voyage possible to her capacity. Can you get her for me?"

"Certainly; and the price?"

"Never mind the price. I want the boat even if I have to buy her—that is, of course, if she is the best to be had."

"She is the very best, and the fastest as well."

"Good."

"Where do you expect to sail?"

"I want you to find somebody who will answer that question for me."

"How, sir?"

"I want to find two or three old sailors who know this ocean thoroughly, to go with me as passengers. I will pay them well for it. I simply want their advice after we get to sea—whether I follow it or not after I get it."

"I know of one such man, and he is the very best. I think he will be better than three, for three might quarrel."

"Very good. Find him. Can you bring him to my hotel?"

"Yes; at any hour you say."

"It is four o'clock now. Make it at six. Can you see the captain of the *Vampire* in the meantime?"

"I can."

"Is he a competent man?"

"He is a retired lieutenant of the navy."

"Excellent. Tell him for me to lose no time in starting his provisioning operations, and if he knows where to pick up the right sort of guns—she ought to carry a rapid-firer or two, I think—to get them also, and some ammunition. We may have to use them."

"I will attend to all that. In fact, I have anticipated part of it, and the matter is so nearly in readiness now, that I have no doubt you will be able to get away in the forenoon to-morrow."

"That is splendid. I am greatly indebted to you. I wish you were going with us."

"I should like very much to do so."

"Would you, indeed? Can you get a leave of absence?"

"Yes; I already have the promise of it."

"Then go with us by all means. By the way, you have not yet told me your name."

"Burke Crawford, at your service from this hour until we return to this port from a successful mission."

"Shake on that," said Chick.

"Now what is the name of the sailor whom you suggest for adviser?" he added, a moment later.

"Silas Tarbell. He is seventy years old or more, but

as bright and as good a sailor as ever. He has been everything from cabin boy to master, and he served in the latter capacity about forty years. I don't think there is a square mile of the Pacific Ocean he has not touched upon during that time."

"Then he's just the man I want."

"More than that, he believes he can make a pretty good guess now regarding the location of that island."

"What? You know about the island, do you?"

"The inspector in New York wired us the full information; as much as you possessed yourself."

"That was thoughtful of him. So Tarbell thinks that he can almost locate the island now, does he?"

"He says so, and quite positively."

"Why?"

"Well, he claims to know every charted island of the Pacific, and several that are not on the charts, for there are still some which have not been located."

"I suppose that is true."

"It is his idea that Dr. Quartz, if he really possesses such an island as has been described to us, would select one of those not on the chart, if he happened to know, by sailing past it some time in the past, that such a place existed."

"Sure he would."

"Tarbell argues that Quartz has some time been yachting, or has been wrecked, or has been aboard of a vessel which encountered an island which the master said was not on the chart; and he thinks that is the only way in which a man like Quartz would think of possessing a plaything of that kind."

"I think the old salt is right."

"He claims that he can find three islands which are not charted."

"Three, eh?"

"Yes; two of them are uninhabitable, but the other looked to him when he passed it on his last cruise as if a pleasant vacation might be passed there, provided the whole thing did not slip back into the ocean during the night."

"Do they have a habit of doing that sort of thing?"

"Sure they do—in the Pacific, and especially in the Southern Pacific. That is why uncharted islands are found, and open water where charted islands are supposed to exist. They come up in the night, nod at you in the morning, and slip back into the deep again in the course of a day, or a week, or a month, or a year, or ten years."

"Pleasant, isn't it? I don't think I'd care to live on one of them."

"Tarbell thinks that is the sort of island that Quartz has selected."

"Mr. Crawford, you have given me courage. I had an idea when we started for this place, that I would have to take a zigzag course all over the Pacific, but I see now that we can go to work on a system."

"Indeed you can. The other course would have been folly to undertake. It would have consumed years."

"If it were necessary, and it consumed a century, provided I lived so long, I would still be sailing the Pacific at the end of a hundred years. I am searching for the dearest friend I have on earth, or ever expect to have."

"I like the way you speak of him."

"Do you know anything about the yacht in which Quartz sailed?" asked Chick.

"Yes, something, though not much."

"What sort of a craft is she?"

"She was brought here from the other side—from Japan, I think, and is very swift."

"How long has she been here?"

"More than a year, and during that time I cannot find that a single person in the city has ever been aboard of her. Her people came ashore sometimes, but they were all East Indians. They were uncommunicative; never talked at all. In fact, I have told you all I know about the craft."

"How big is she?"

"About the same size as the *Vampire*. I think the two will be well matched for speed and strength if it should come to a show down."

"Let us hope that it will come to a show down, and that very soon."

"We ought to shake again on that, Mr. Carter, for I hope so, too, for your sake."

"Here we are at the hotel, Mr. Crawford; and now, since you have joined my party, will you attend to those commissions I gave you?"

"At once."

"And bring the captain and the sailor to me here?"

"As soon as they can be brought, but not much before the hour you named—six."

CHAPTER VI.

ONE MAN IN A MILLION.

When Chick looked upon the old sailor who was brought to him—the man whom Crawford had said boasted of having sailed across every square mile of the Pacific Ocean, he looked upon him in surprise.

"I was told that you were past seventy years old," he said to him, "but you don't look to be more than fifty."

"Well, sir," replied the old master, taking the chair offered to him, "as a matter of log reckoning I have weathered the wear and tear of nigh upon eighty years."

"Indeed! Well, you should be proud of the manner in which you carry them."

"Any man can live a long time if he only tells the truth, sir. Lying is the only thing which really wears upon a man; leastwise, that's my experience."

"It certainly is not a bad rule to follow. I am told that you know the Pacific Ocean from top to bottom."

"Yes, sir, and from edge to edge if you like to lay your course that way."

"And every island in it."

"Every one which is suposed to be in it, and a lot that ain't exactly supposed to be there at all."

"And it is one of these latter which you think we want to find, eh?"

"That's my reckoning."

"Mr. Crawford has told you all about it?"

"He spun the yarn in good shape, sir."

"Well, Mr. Tarbell, before we proceed any further I want to say one thing."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"From what Mr. Crawford has told me, I have decided that you are the man I want on this cruise——"

"Thankee, sir."

"And I have decided to engage you without more words. Your pay, from this moment will be double the ordinary pay of a ship's master, and—if you find the island we seek, and find those men who sailed there, or any of them upon it when we get there, you will receive a bonus of ten thousand dollars. Now, that's settled. You need not say a word."

The old sailor nodded and remained mute.

"Crawford said you had, or thought you had, a pretty good idea where this island is located."

"I think I have."

"Where is it?"

"In the Southern Pacific, or leastwise it is almost there."

"How long will it take us to get there with the *Vampire?*"

"Well, sir, judging from what I know about the *Vampire,* and from what I have heard about the *Dunjar,* which is the craft in which that man Quartz sailed, and remembering that the *Dunjar* sailed from this port six days ago, I should say that we would get there about five days—maybe four days, after they do."

"I see your point. You propose to make straight for this island that is in your mind, with all possible speed."

"That's the idee."

"And you think the *Vampire* is a trifle faster than the *Dunjar.*"

"No, I don't. I think the *Dunjar* is the faster of the two."

"Then how——"

"They won't be crowding things and we will."

"I see."

"They'll be taking it easy, never dreaming that we can follow in a straight course, and they'll just loaf along to save coal."

"So you think we can make up a day or two on them."

"Yes, sir, all of that, and maybe three or four—

maybe the whole five. There is even such a thing as our getting there first."

"Great Scott! How do you make that out?"

"Well, sir, in two or three ways. In the first place, I don't know her skipper, and therefore I've no idee how well he knows his course; but I know how well I know mine."

"I see."

"I can go for that island as straight as you could shoot a rifle; maybe he can't."

"Good! I hope not."

"In the second place, they're bound to loaf. The Pacific is a mighty pleasant place to be at this season of the year. There are a lot of islands along the route where they might want to stop for an hour or two, or even for a day; we ain't going to stop."

"Not on your life."

"That's about all the reasons I think of just now, but they're good ones. The only thing about it is, is it the island? And that we can't determine till we get there; but I think it must be, and if I'm to be the captain of the compass, I'm going there first."

"You're boss of the compass this cruise, Mr. Tarbell."

"Thankee, sir. Now, I want to get to that island first if it is a possible thing to do so, for if we don't, we're going to find it a mighty hard job to get on it."

"What sort of an island is it?"

"That's just the p'int. Begging your pardon, it's a heaven of an island and a hell of an island rolled into one."

"Why so?"

"When you approach it you think it's just a barren mountain sticking up out of the sea, and nothing more; but when you come to sail around it, you find on the southeastern quarter—for it is almost round—that there's a little narrow opening in the rocks, narrower at the top than it is at the bottom. It ain't more than twice as wide at the water's edge than the beam of the *Vampire*, and we've got to sail through that hole to get inside."

"Is there a harbor in there?"

"The finest you ever saw, and big enough to anchor two battleships, and deep enough, so far as I know, to reach to the other side of the world."

"But is the place some sort of a cavern?"

"Lord bless you, no. That is where the heaven part of it comes in."

"I don't quite understand you."

"Well, sir, when the Lord raised that there mountain out of the sea, he left it hollow, clean to within about five fathoms of the water's edge. Then He planted all sorts of trees, and flowers, and pretty growing things in there, and so made a regular garden of Eden out of it. The sun shines in there just long enough each day to make them things grow to beat the band, but the rest of the time it is as shady and cool as it is here now, and we're in the month of May in the State of Californy. You can't get a wind in there, but you always get a breeze by reason of the draught drawin' up through that crevice and the shaft."

"How large is the interior you speak of?"

"Reckoning as landsmen reckon, I should say about a matter of twenty-five or thirty rods across. Maybe more; maybe less."

"You couldn't sail through that hole you speak of in a storm, could you?"

"No; and you won't have to. There ain't no storms there now, at this time of year."

"It would be a fine thing, captain, if we could get there before they do."

"We're going to make a try of it. The skipper says he'll be ready at five in the morning. That is why he begged off coming here to see you to-night at six."

"Yes; Crawford told me. We will sail the moment he is ready. What about the guns?"

"He's got them—two of them."

"Mounted?"

"He'll mount 'em after we get to sea."

"And small arms?"

"A plenty. Mr. Crawford attended to that part of it."

"And coal?"

"Her bunkers are full to the tops. It'll carry her there under high pressure, and I think will bring her

home, too; but by golly! if it won't, we can sail home. What I want to do is to get there."

"You seem to be entirely positive that it is the place, captain."

"Well, sir, my great grandmother was a South Sea Island witch-woman—at least, that is what they called them. She could see things. We call 'em impressions, or hunches, nowadays, but I must have inherited something of that sort from her, for there are times when I see things, too; and when I see 'em as I see this thing, I know they're right. It ain't never led me off the course once in all my life."

"God grant that it is correct this time."

"Amen, sir."

"Have you looked over our crew?"

"Thoroughly."

"Is it all right?"

"The best ever."

"Will they fight if called upon to do so?"

"That's what they've signed articles to do. Mr. Crawford and the skipper saw to that part of it, and either one of them could have done it alone."

"It seems, captain, that I have found friends where I expected to have to work almost alone."

"You've got two kinds of friends working for you, sir; friends of the heart and friends of money. Where one doesn't count, the other does, and in most cases, the first will come pretty near counting for both; leastwise that's the size of my short experience in life."

"Short? Do you call almost eighty years short?"

"It's all too short for me. I'd like to live eight hundred."

"Why so, captain?"

"Well, for one reason, because I might, in that length of time, hope to find another gentleman as liberal as you are, and one whom I could like so well on so short an acquaintance. Don't forget that I told you a moment ago that I always tell the truth."

"You like my dollars and you like me, too, is that it?"

"That's the idee; and now that I know you, if you didn't have a dollar to your name, I'd go to the South Sea with you just the same. Put her thar"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHAIN WHICH HELD HIM.

And during all this time, what of Nick Carter?

In order to reply to that question we will have to return for a moment to the old barn, and to the scene of his capture.

The detective realized that he was indeed in the hands of the enemy, and he knew that every precaution would be used to prevent his escape; but, thoroughly understanding his own powers as he did, he had no doubt that an opportunity of some kind would offer whereby he might make a break and a fight for liberty.

But he did not know, nor did it once occur to him, what means his captors would take to prevent his escape.

The party seemed in no haste to depart from the old barn, and Nick wondered somewhat at that, for close as it was to a traveled highway, there was always the danger to them that a passer-by might discover that something unusual was taking place, and interfere.

No such thing as that happened, however.

Dr. Crystal was presently taken down from the chair where Nick had placed him, and he with Quartz and Zanoni drew to one side in consultation.

This talk of theirs occupied several minutes, and during the interval, the cowboys who had charge of the ropes, which held the detective, relaxed their vigilance just a very little bit—just enough so that Nick felt the coils around his body slacken.

He realized that it was a case of now or never, and he made the effort.

With a sudden spring he threw himself back upon his shoulders and from them leaped to his feet, as you have seen athletes do at times. It is more of a trick than a muscular feat, and Nick succeeded in so far as getting upon his feet was concerned.

But the tough ropes which held him were made to hold steers and were all too strong for his muscles, so that when he sought to burst them by distending the muscles of his arms and straining against them, the effort was fruitless.

At the same time the cowboys, recalled to their sense of duty, jerked back upon the ropes, and so brought the detective to the floor again; and then, as Chick figured out after his study of the interior of the barn, they dragged him to one side and held him there as they had before held him in the middle of the room.

Nick was close enough to the partition now so that he could remain in a sitting posture, and realizing that the floor was covered with dust, it occurred to him that if he exercised great care he might succeed in tracing some single word upon that dust which would afford Chick a clew when he should take the trail and undertake to find him.

He lost some valuable time in trying to select one word which would express the most, and then he remembered what Quartz had said to him—that he intended to take him to his island in the Pacific, there to use him as a subject for vivisection.

And so he wrote the word "Pacific."

"One of the boys will remember the boast made by Quartz in Kansas City, about his island in the Pacific Ocean," he thought, "and they will know what that word means, and if they only get here soon enough they will be able to head off this outfit at the coast."

It will be seen from this that Nick had little idea that a single opportunity would be afforded him to make use of his great strength in an effort to escape; but, nevertheless, he had no idea what course they would pursue to rob him of that strength.

It was a course against which no human being could have battled—against which Nick Carter, had he been tenfold stronger and greater, had no chance; and he was soon to discover what it was.

Soon after he had written the word in the dust on the floor the conference at the opposite side of the room broke up and Dr. Quartz approached him with that tiger-like tread of his so suggestive of a wild beast stealing upon its prey.

His eyes were shining unwontedly, and that bland smile, which would have done credit to a bishop of a church, beamed upon his countenance.

"Well, my festive Carter," he said, in the softest and mildest tones, "how goes the hour?"

"It's rather monotonous, doctor, if anybody should ride up in an automobile and ask you."

"Ha! Not so bad. Some one will ride up, presently, and ask me, but not exactly in an automobile. However, we will let that pass. Do you realize, Carter, that now I have got you, I don't intend to allow you the slightest opportunity to escape?"

"I realize that such is your intention."

"We are going on a long journey, my friend."

"So you have already informed me."

"There will be carriages here presently. They will take us to the railway station—Dr. Crystal, Zanoni, myself and you. The others are to go by a different route, but their destination will be the same. We will all meet in San Francisco."

"Why do you tell me all this, Quartz?"

"Really, I don't know. Simply for the pleasure it affords me, I suppose."

"All right. Go ahead. I am a good listener."

"So I perceive. Have you realized how we shall travel?"

"Why, on the cars, I suppose."

"You are pleased to be facetious. We are to travel in the capacity of two doctors and a nurse, with their distinguished patient."

"I suppose I am the distinguished patient."

"Correct; you are."

"I'll be a dandy."

"I've no doubt of it."

"Am I supposed to be an insane person? That's an old dodge, and it might work, but——"

"Pray don't give yourself any encouragement. I do not understand medicines for nothing. I can create a patient as well as cure one, and you know I can do the latter."

"It is about the only good thing you can do, Quartz."

"I never do it from a sense of the goodness in it, but because I like to triumph over disease. That is why I have my island in the Pacific for my studies in vivisection. After a year or two passed there in close study, I will know more than all the doctors of the

world combined. That is my passion. I don't mind telling you."

"It is a pity that you could not have put your science to good uses."

"I suppose it is, Carter; really I do," said the doctor, dreamily. "Do you know, Nick Carter, that after all is said and done, I quite like you? I am speaking seriously and telling the truth."

"Perhaps I ought to thank you, but I don't quite see it that way."

"And after we get out there to my island, we will have many a pleasant discussion together while I am cutting you up. You will make a splendid subject. You have the nerve to stand it;" and the doctor, rubbed his hands together and smiled.

Nick did not reply, and after a moment the doctor continued:

"I will have to render you entirely helpless in order to take you to the coast without danger to myself; but I assure you that when the drug, which I shall administer, has worn off you will be none the worse for it."

Then Nick Carter understood.

He was to be drugged in some manner, and after that he was to travel with those three, two of them posing as his physicians, and Zanoni as the nurse, or, perhaps, the wife of the distinguished individual they would represent him to be.

He knew then that there was little hope that he would ever have an oportunity to escape from the fiends into whose hands he had fallen unless he could hope to swim home from that far island in the Pacific.

He saw the doctor take a small case from his pocket and extract from it a hypodermic syringe and needles. Then the man of medicine crossed to where the light was burning and poured a few drops of liquid from a phial into a tiny glass receptacle also taken from the leather case.

He seemed to prepare the concoction with exceeding care, measuring out drops from several phials and stirring them together with the point of the needle.

At last it seemed to satisfy him, and he filled the syringe and returned to the detective.

"This," he said, holding the instrument before Nick's eyes, "is a wonderful mixture. The physicians of the city would give their lives almost to know about it and what it will do, what it will prevent and what it will cure; and this is what I am going to administer to you. You should be very proud of the distinction."

"Well, I can't say that I'm exactly swimming in delight," replied Nick, smiling, for now that he realized that he was thoroughly in this man's power, he was resolved that there should not be a shade of anxiety in his demeanor.

"Ah! That is an excellent phrase, and you have applied it with wonderful accuracy, for that is exactly what you will be doing within five minutes after I have administered this—swimming in delight. That is the effect it will produce; and you will continue to so swim until you have reached your destination. You will swear then that I have done you a kindness. You will have been living in Elysia, in Utopia, in that dim dreamland the like of which is not to be found save in this drug alone. Ah! Carter, I envy you."

"Then for goodness sake take my place. I won't kick."

"Always humorous, aren't you?"

"Well, this isn't exactly a humorous situation for me, but such as it is I will have to make the best of it until there is a new deal and I hold a better hand."

"There will be no new deal in this game, Carter."

"Oh, yes, there will. There always is."

Quartz shrugged his shoulders; then he leaned forward.

"Will you lie quietly, Carter?" he asked; "because if you will not, I will have to call some of these men to hold you."

"Oh, yes. I'll take my medicine. I see that it must be—for the present."

"That is sensible."

Quartz pushed back the sleeve of the detective's coat, bared his arm and inserted the needle under the skin, and an instant later Nick felt as if the breath of a thousand fires was surging through his veins.

But that sensation lasted for an instant only. Just as he thought he could not bear it, it ceased altogether and was succeeded by a gentle glow throughout his body.

He looked up and smiled at Quartz; he realized that his understanding of the surroundings was changing, and yet that he was conscious in spite of it all.

And then he saw Zanoni approach him, and with gentle touch release him from the bonds which held him, and he was passively grateful to her for the act.

CHAPTER VIII.

ZANONI, THE TRANSFIGURED.

The wonderful part of the effect of the drug upon the detective was, that while it did not deprive him of consciousness, it divested him of reasoning power and utterly perverted his understanding, while it also deprived him of his memory of the past.

He saw Quartz, and Crystal, and Zanoni around him, and he remembered only that he knew them; but try as he might he could not remember their names or who and what they were or had been to him.

He could not recall even that they were his enemies; indeed, the feeling he had for them then, was one of gratitude for every kind act they performed.

For example, when Zanoni undid the ropes from around his body, he thanked her gratefully, although he spoke in a very weak voice that was full of lassitude. When they stood him on his feet, his knees tottered under him, and when Dr. Crystal stepped forward on one side and Zanoni on the other and placed, each, an arm around him, lifting his own arms at the same time until they rested on their respective shoulders around their necks, he thanked them again, regarding it as a great kindness, since he felt much too weak to stand without assistance.

He was conscious without consciousness, if such a paradox can be imagined.

"It is strange," he said to them, "that I do not seem to remember who you are, although I know that you are friends—nor even who I am. It is strange, isn't it?"

"No, dear," replied Zanoni, in her sweetest tones. "It is not strange. You have been so very, very ill; but you are better now."

"Oh, yes, that is it. So very, very ill; but I am better now. But who am I, eh?"

"Will you repeat your name after me, and try to remember, if I will tell you?" asked Zanoni.

"Indeed I will. This fog over me is not pleasant. I have been very, very ill; but I am better now. You told me that. I am better now, am I not?"

"Yes; much better, dear."

"Dear? Dear? Why do you call me dear?"

"Because I am your wife, sweetheart; your wife, and you are my husband, Sir Algernon Travers. And surely you remember the good Dr. Sinclair who has never left you once during all your terrible illness? And Dr. Morton, the great specialist? Come here, Dr. Morton, and see if Sir Algernon remembers you."

Quartz stepped in front of Nick and beamed upon him, and Nick replied instantly:

"Yes, yes, of course, I remember Dr. Morton. How are you, doctor? My wife says that I am better now. Is it true?"

"Quite true, Sir Algy—quite true."

"Dear me, dear me!" murmured Nick. "How strange it all is. I did not remember one of you a moment ago when I opened my eyes, although I seemed to know you quite well. But now it is all clear to me."

"And Lady Mary, your wife? You remember her now, also, do you not? She has been suffering terribly because you did not know her?"

"Ah! yes. Mary. Yes, yes. But why are we in this strange place, doctor?"

"Our carriages broke down and we were obliged to send them to be repaired. They will be here presently. These men around you, are your attendants and

servants. You don't remember that when we left home, in England, you insisted that we should bring them all with us."

"Did I? No; I don't remember that."

"But we don't need them now. I have directed that they return while we continue on our way to the Pacific Coast. Your yacht, the *Dunjar,* is awaiting us at San Francisco, you know."

"Is she? I had forgotten."

"Yes; she came around through the Suez Canal and across the Pacific more than a year ago, and has been awaiting us there ever since."

"Have I been ill so long a time?"

"Two years, Sir Algernon. Two very long years."

"Strange," said Nick, shaking his head. "I do not remember being ill at all."

"No, of course not; and you must not try to recall the past. It is not good for you. I am going to cure you now as quickly as possible, for Lady Mary's sake if for no other reason, and I have great hopes of our cruise in the South Seas."

"Ah! We are going there, are we?"

"Yes; directly we arrive at San Francisco."

"That will be pleasant."

"Yes; and it will be of great benefit to you. But were it not for your great wealth, the cruise would have been impossible."

"My great wealth? Yes. My great wealth; of course."

Zanoni reached up with her disengaged hand and stroked his forehead gently, and the touch was soothing to him.

"That is pleasant—Mary," he said.

"I will attend to you all the time the doctors will permit it, after we are once on the cars," she replied.

All this is repeated here to show how deftly they coached him in his part. First they stole away his memory; then they supplied him with a new one, and the strangest part of it was that afterward when he was brought back to consciousness and complete understanding, he remembered almost word for word, everything that had taken place.

The impressions they supplied for his distorted thinking powers were applied so deftly and so gently that they fell upon him without a jar, and his worst enemies were transformed in a moment to his best friends.

And then the carriages arrived.

Into one of them, a closed one, the two doctors, with Zanoni and Nick, took their places. The others received the remainder of the party.

Then the door of the barn was closed and they drove away.

When they arrived at the station, Nick and Zanoni remained in the carriage together while the two doctors strolled around the platform arm in arm awaiting the train, for both had decided that the bold way was the best, and they took that last chance of being recognized, keeping their faces in the shadow all the time.

In the meantime, a telegram was sent ahead for a private car, to the nearest station at which it could be procured, for money was no object to Dr. Quartz, as the reader knows.

From whence he derived his fortune or how great it was, nobody ever knew, but that it was ample, he had demonstrated on more than one occasion.

The arch fiend himself seemed to be in league with these conspirators. They had no difficulty in securing the stateroom of the Pullman on the train which rolled in at the station a few moments later, and at the expected point a special car for the use of Lord Algernon Travers was attached to their train.

Thus, all the way across the continent, they traveled in comparative privacy and security, and they were treated with the utmost consideration in every way.

Lord Algernon Travers was understood to be immensely wealthy, and, indeed, the manner in which Dr. Quartz bestowed gratuities was sufficient proof of it.

Telegrams ahead had secured carriages in waiting for them, and they were driven directly to the wharf and taken off to the yacht.

She was already provisioned and prepared in every way for the voyage, and no time was lost in weighing anchor and getting out of the harbor after the necessary preliminaries had been complied with.

Off the coast and out at sea, the farce was still kept

up; and there were two reasons for this. Dr. Quartz did not wish Nick Carter to know who he really was until he had him safely landed on that far island in the South Pacific—and Zanoni insisted that things should remain as they were as long as possible.

She had found a new pleasure in playing the part of Nick Carter's wife. This gentle, courtly man who smiled at her so trustingly, who believed in her so thoroughly, who trusted her so implicitly, even though it was not he himself who did it, had taught her a new lesson.

She knew that it was all a play, or rather a tragedy; she knew that if Nick Carter were himself again he would as soon permit a rattlesnake to caress him, as her; and yet, to be believed in and trusted was a new experience for her. It was one she had never understood before, and for the first time in her life she asked herself if it would not have been better for her to have been good and noble, and to have placed her splendid accomplishments and her wondrous beauty to good uses instead of bad.

She sat by the hour with Nick, holding his hands, stroking his forehead, pushing his hair back from his temples with deft and tender touch; and sometimes, when neither of the doctors were near, she kissed his brow gently and reverently.

It was all so new to her, this confidence he reposed in her.

She had never met with it before. She had never believed that it existed; but now she knew it did exist, even though this was only an imitation.

But the imitation was sweet. It awoke some sleeping goodness away down in the depths of her perverted soul, and it told her that after all there was a woman—long ago lost to life and view—but still that there was a woman in her heart.

Do not suppose that she was learning to love Nick Carter. It was not that; but she did love the tenderness and the confidence which he bestowed upon her in the guise of Lord Algernon Travers.

Once Quartz said to her;

"Zanoni, are you losing your heart to Lord Algy?"

"No," she replied, tensely, "but I have learned that once there was a heart which I might have developed. Leave me alone, Jack. Let me have my little heaven while he has his. It is something strange that I feel, and you had best not disturb me in it; only it is not love. I think really that I am mourning over the grave of my power to love as a good woman should love."

"And when Nick Carter is himself again, what then?"

"Why, then, Lord Algernon will be dead, will he not? It is to him I am kneeling in reverence for what he has taught me. Nick Carter will hate me as he has always hated me, and I have no doubt that I will feel toward him as I have always felt; but now——"

"Well? But now——"

"Now you had best leave me alone lest your own act calls to life something within me which had better continue to sleep as long as Zanoni lives. Nick Carter is having his dream, so let me have mine."

And she returned to her patient and kissed his brow reverently again.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRAGEDY ON THE ISLAND.

Their voyage through southern seas was a long one.

They cruised slowly, and yet with sufficient speed and directness for their purposes, and also without a stop at any of the numerous islands they encountered.

Nick was never able to walk about the deck unaided; but he could do so with one arm around Zanoni's neck and resting upon her shoulders; and this he was never tired of doing.

Sometimes they sat together for hours in the waist of the vessel, away from the proximity of the two doc-

tors who preferred the after deck; and when Nick asked her to describe that supposed home of his in England, she drew a picture which would have rivaled Bulwer Lytton.

But that strange weakness and lassitude never once left him, although he seemed to be perfectly happy all the time.

And so the two lived in a dream; he in one which was forced upon him, but which was nevertheless delicious; and she in one of her own conjuring, which was as truly real so long as she could be away out of the sight of the two doctors whom she was rapidly learning to hate.

"But for Quartz," she muttered to herself at times, "I might have known the reality of all this; but for him, I might have been good, and I see now only too well how much better goodness is."

At last the tall island loomed up before them out of the sea.

It seemed like a mountain from which the peak has been cleft with a mighty cleaver.

There was no verdure in sight—nothing but that huge mountain dipping into the sea, offering no place of landing.

But they steamed around it to the southern side, and there, like the letter A without the bar, was an opening, twice the width of the beam of their fleet vessel.

The sea was as calm as a lake in midsummer, and the *Dunjar* sailed straight through this cleft in the rocks, into a deep, wide harbor where she was presently warped against the shore, for the water was too deep to permit of anchoring.

In front of them, sloping gently upward to a considerable elevation, was a beautiful spread of grass-grown lawn, dotted here and there with palms and other tropical growth; and from the heat outside on the ocean, they had entered a paradise of invigorating coolness.

"This is heaven," murmured Nick, gazing upon it and taking in grateful draughts of the sweet, cool air.

"No," replied Zanoni, forgetting herself, "it is hell."

He turned and smiled down upon her.

"Why do you say that?" he asked; and she replied, quickly:

"I was thinking of the heat outside."

There was a low, square house in the foreground, built of the rocks which had tumbled from the cliffs above them, and into this they were presently conducted.

An hour later Quartz appeared suddenly in front of Nick and Zanoni, where they were seated together among the flowers. He carried a hypodermic in one hand and a towel in the other.

"Come," he said, rather gruffly for him, for it was his invariable habit to speak in that gentle tone he knew so well how to assume. "It is time we did something for our patient."

Zanoni leaped quickly to her feet and faced him.

"Not now," she said, breathlessly.

"And why not now?"

"Because I say not," she said, in a low tone, her eyes darkening ominously. "To-morrow will be time enough."

"Now is a better time," said the doctor, resuming his calmness.

"What is it all about?" asked Nick, not understanding at all to what they referred.

"About you and your illness, dear," said Zanoni, turning to him. "Wait here for me; I will return in a moment."

Then she seized Quartz by the arm and pulled him reluctantly away out of the hearing of their patient.

"Wait until to-morrow," she pleaded. "Give me

just this one day, here, and to-morrow I will be Zanoni again."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"You will never be Zanoni again," he said. "This farce has gone on long enough. One would suppose that I had administered the drug to you as well as to him. No; I shall bring him to himself at once."

She took a step further away from him, and faced him with blazing eyes from which all suggestion of softness had disappeared, and for a moment they stood there facing each other in silence. Then, in a tone so low that it scarcely reached his sense of hearing, she said:

"Touch him to-day at your peril, Jack Quartz. He is mine for to-day; to-morrow you shall have him."

"To-day," said the doctor, grimly, but with determination.

"Quartz," she almost whispered again, "promise me faithfully, here and now, that you will leave him as he is until to-morrow morning, or I swear to you that I will return to him now and kill him with my own hands where he sits yonder on the bench;" and she took a dagger from her bosom and held it before his eyes.

Dr. Quartz resorted then to argument.

"Why prolong it?" he asked. "Have you not had enough of this farce?"

"No; not enough until to-morrow," she replied.

"But will it be any different then?"

"I have given you my word."

"Crystal agrees with me that the play should end; that we should make Nick Carter understand that at last we have been successful against him."

"Crystal!" she said, in a low tone—and laughed, menacingly.

He took a step toward her, but she stood her ground with the dagger still poised in her hand.

"Be careful," she said. "I am perhaps the only person in the world who does not fear you unless it is that man yonder when he is in his right senses. Step back again to where you were, Dr. Quartz, or our contract is at an end. You know what that means."

"You love that fool, Lord Algy," he muttered.

"No, I do not; but I love the confidence he reposes in me, and—while he is Lord Algy, he loves me. I want that confidence and that love until to-morrow morning, and you had best let me have it."

He remained silent, looking at her; and she was silent, facing him, awaiting his answer.

And then a hand reached out from behind and seized the wrist of the hand which held the dagger; it was Dr. Crystal, who had stolen silently upon them.

But he had not reckoned correctly on the strength of this woman.

With a quick wrench of her arm she tore herself free from his grasp, and then, turning like a flash, she drove the dagger to the hilt in Dr. Crystal's side.

"You dare to touch me, you viper?" she said, still in that same low tone, looking upon him as he writhed at her feet; and then as Quartz started forward to go to his assistance, she confronted him again with the dagger raised.

"Back! Stand back!" she ordered. "Let him die! Let him die, I say! Do you suppose I could live on this island with him after what he did? Back, I say, or as sure as I am Zanoni, I will serve you as I have served him."

She kept her eyes on Quartz and her back half turned to the man she had stabbed, and who was rapidly expiring.

She heard his moans, but she paid no heed to them; she was watching Quartz. She could hear that he was trying to speak and she knew that he was endeavoring to drag himself nearer to her; but she did not move.

She knew where her dagger had struck, and she

knew what was on the point of that small weapon to render it a thousandfold deadly.

And Dr. Quartz knew as well as she what a prick from that dagger meant.

For once in his experience he was afraid. He feared the awful anger of this apparently delicate woman, and he dared not move a step nearer to her.

Then, suddenly, out of the foliage from which they had issued into the little open glade where this tragedy was enacted, a figure leaped, and it came so silently and so swiftly that neither of them heard it until it was upon them.

It was Lord Algernon Travers—that is, it was Nick Carter.

He leaped swiftly past Zanoni and full at the throat of Dr. Quartz; he seized him, and lifting him fairly from his feet, flung him to the earth with the same power of strength for which he had been always famous; and then as the doctor struggled to his feet again, he, too, sank back upon the ground.

That strength which had come to him only for a moment in defense of the woman he thought he loved, was only transitory; it was gone instantly; and they both saw and understood.

"My strength is gone, Mary," murmured Nick, from the ground. "I am too ill to defend you now."

She went to him swiftly and knelt beside him, while Quartz remained at a little distance, delicately brushing his clothing.

"He was not going to injure me, dear," she said, breathlessly, for she never had expected such devotion as this; "were you, doctor? It was the other one, and he is dead. It was Dr. Sinclair, not Dr. Morton. Tell him so, Dr. Morton."

Quartz moved a step nearer.

"Yes, my lord, she is right," he said.

"Then I must apologize to you, sir, for my abruptness; but I thought you were attacking my wife. It made me strong again for a moment."

Quartz shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"Have it your own way, Lady Mary," he said. "It shall be as you will it. I am sorry about Crystal, but it can't be helped now. Take your darling away from this spot until I attend to our departed friend;" and he shrugged his shoulders again, and laughed.

It was evident that at heart he was not sorry for the fate that had overtaken his pupil.

"Come," said Zanoni to Nick; and she helped him to his feet and led him back to the spot where they were seated when Quartz interrupted them.

And when they were alone together again, she put both arms around Nick's neck, and for the first time kissed him on the lips; and she kissed him again and again, weeping in the meantime, the only tears she had shed since she was a child.

* * * * * * *

The following morning at ten o'clock Dr. Quartz administered the drug which brought Nick Carter to himself again.

CHAPTER X.

DR. QUARTZ'S GENEROUS FALSEHOOD.

Night on the South Pacific!

The *Vampire* had sighted the island early in the day, and had stood on and off throughout the period of daylight, keeping well to the northward of the island, and thus entirely out of possible view of Dr. Quartz and his followers.

But when the sun seemed to be put out by the sea, her course was turned again toward their goal, and as the night deepened she approached it closely.

Chick and the captain, with the old salt, Tarbell and Ten-Ichi and Patsy, held a long consultation during the afternoon concerning the most feasible plan of ap-

proaching their prey, for prey they now regarded everything which concerned Dr. Quartz.

And this particular night was the one following upon that morning when the detective was restored to his right mind.

Of that restoration a word must be said, although our scene is now properly aboard the *Vampire.*

When Nick returned to consciousness, he was in a room with Dr. Quartz and three of his followers, who stood ready to be of assistance to the doctor should their patient prove in any way unwieldy, for with the elimination of the drug which had held his senses and his strength in thrall so long, every power and strength of muscle and mind, which Nick Carter possessed, came back to him.

Zanoni was not present.

As Nick straightened himself on the sofa on which he had been lying, and brought himself to a sitting posture, he glanced around him in all directions.

"Where is she?" he asked. "Where is Ma—Zanoni?"

"I think," replied Quartz, smiling, "she is contemplating leaping from the top of one of the cliffs of this island into the sea, with the memory of Lord Algy in her embrace."

"It is a great pity, doctor," said Nick, soberly and thoughtfully, "that Lord Algy might not have taken that leap with her before—before that tragedy occurred."

"You remember everything, then, do you, Carter?"

"Everything, to the minutest detail."

"Then my drug is a greater success than I supposed."

"I should say that it is a greater curse than even you could have hoped for. Where is Zanoni? I wish to see her."

"So do I wish to see her. She cannot be found, even in this small place; but there are many caverns here, many crevices in the rocks where she might hide; and I think she has concealed herself in one of them to dream over the recollections of——"

"Hush, doctor! Torture me with your knives and scalpels, and bid her look on in glee if you will, you will find me a willing patient provided you do not now or ever, taunt me with—with that. But answer me one question."

"What is it?"

"Did you give her the drug also, that you gave to me? Did she believe that she was Lady Mary, as I believed myself to be Lord Algy? And have you brought her back to herself this morning as you have brought me back?"

The doctor hesitated; presently he said:

"There are three questions instead of one, but since they involve the same thought, I will reply to them all in one word."

"Well, is it yes, or no?"

"It is—yes."

"Thank God for that!"

"Another question if you would have me a willing patient. Who killed Crystal? She, or you?"

"I."

"Thank Heaven for that, also. Now, doctor, I know that we have traveled across the sea many thousands of miles. I know that you are surrounded here by men who will do your bidding. I know that you intend to torture me. Let me advise you, therefore, never to be for a moment unguarded, for if the slightest opportunity offers, I will kill you."

"You just now said you would be a willing patient provided I did not refer to——"

"I did. I did. I will keep my word."

* * * * * * *

The consultation referred to between the men on board the *Vampire* was rather animated, the captain's

opinion being that the best plan was to steam directly into the harbor with the yacht.

In this he was upheld by Ten-Ichi and Patsy, but old man Tarbell and Chick stood out for making the attack in boats, silently and in the dead of night.

"The sea is as smooth as glass," argued Chick. "Nobody on that island will even dream of an assault. Every soul of them will be sleeping, if we wait until about two in the morning. I doubt even if they will take the trouble to set a watch on board their craft, the *Dunjar*.. We can overcome them without a struggle."

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"You are the master here," he said. "Give your orders and they will be followed."

"Then I so order."

And so, at two in the morning, four small boats stole silently away from the sides of the *Vampire*, and crept stealthily toward that cleft in the rocks which formed the entrance to the island's wonderful harbor.

Not a word was spoken. The oarlocks were muffled. A dog on the shore could not have been aroused by their approach.

Inside that opening in the rocks the darkness was intense, and they were forced literally to feel their way, and here the old salt showed his wonderful agility for a man of his years.

"Remember that I have South Sea Island blood in my veins," he said; "wait here." And before an objection could be raised he slipped overboard and swam away in the darkness while the four boats, held together by the hands of the men, waited in silence.

It was a long time before he returned, but at last he came.

"There is not a soul of them astir," he whispered to Chick. "We are headed directly for the *Dunjar*. This course will take us under her chains. From there we can slip aboard, and the rest will be dead easy."

"She is there, then?" whispered Chick in reply.

"Yes; and moored at exactly the spot where I thought she'd be. I win my ten thousand, and your friendship, eh?"

"You win twenty thousand if we find Nick Carter alive."

A moment later and they felt the hull of the *Dunjar* against their outstretched hands.

A whispered command passed down from mouth to ear along the boats, and then, one by one, twenty silent figures clambered without a sound upon the deck.

Ten-Ichi led one party down into the forecastle. Patsy, with two followers, went to the galley, in the waist, and Chick, with the captain, the old salt and two of the men approached the cabin.

And then as if by preconcerted action and as if each one of the leaders held a watch in his hand, the forecastle, the galley and the cabin were suddenly brilliantly alight.

The wondering crew, startled out of their sleep, awoke to find themselves looking into the muzzles of rifles aimed at their heads and hearts; the two men in the galley, to find three determined beings standing over them with revolvers, and the captain and his three officers in the cabin, to face the determined visage of Chick, and to see that there was no help for it but to surrender silently, and without a struggle.

And so, in ten minutes, the ship was won without a struggle—almost without a sound.

But now, which way to turn?

The *Dunjar* was searched from stem to stem, but not a sign of Nick Carter, of Dr. Quartz, or of Crystal or Zanoni could be found, of course.

They did not know that there was a building on the island. They could not tell what direction to take to look for one.

"I suggest that we remain where we are till the peep

of day, and then swing down on them like lightning," said the captain.

"That seems to be about the only plan we can follow," admitted Chick, "unless we go about the island with lights, and I don't like to do that. Quartz will murder Mr. Carter, if he discovers that the game is lost."

"Well," drawled old Tarbell, "our hand in this game seems to come pretty near to being a royal flush just about now, and we want to look out that we don't drop a card on the floor."

"What do you suggest?" asked Chick.

"That we feel around in the darkness and report back here after a little," was the reply, and he was on the point of expatiating on his plan when Chick seized his arm.

"Hush!" he said. "Look there!"

Far up on the shore a light glimmered for an instant and then went out. After a moment it appeared again, and was again extinguished. And again, after another moment, it appeared a third time.

"It is somebody showing us the way," whispered Patsy.

"It is Nick," said Chick. "He has seen the lights down here. He suspects that there is help at hand. Come, my men, follow me."

They leaped ashore and ran as rapidly as they could up the bank, across the open space toward the house which they could not see in the darkness; and when they were halfway to the place they sought, the lights showed a fourth time.

The next instant, Chick stepped upon the wide veranda of the house; and then, perceiving that the time had arrived to use a light, he brought out his electric lantern.

The illumination disclosed a wide-open door leading into a spacious hallway, and Chick passed swiftly inside.

As he crossed the threshold, he saw, far down the corridor, a fifth light held for an instant before a door in such a manner that it revealed the panels; and he saw a shadowy figure holding the glimmer of light—a figure which glided away and disappeared in the darkness beyond.

"It was a woman," whispered Ten-Ichi at his elbow. "She meant to show us that door."

"Yes," replied Chick. "Come on."

The door was reached. It was locked, and there was a heavy bar across it. But the bar was cast aside and the door was burst from its remaining fastenings in a moment.

The three assistants entered the room together, followed by the other men—entered it to find Nick Carter sitting bolt upright in a bed, and staring at them in complete surprise.

But the bed itself was inside a cage of strong iron bars, too strong for any man to have broken.

"Hello, Chick! Hello, Pat! Hello, Ten-Ichi!" he exclaimed. "How are you, gentlemen? Glad to see you. I'm as right as a trivet, lads. Nothing is the matter. Quartz is in the next room there," and he pointed in the direction they were to follow. "Some of you knock this thing to pieces and let me out of here, while the others go for him."

Thus he took command quite naturally, the instant they appeared, with all his senses on the alert.

And Quartz was in the adjoining room—but he was dead; quite dead, and almost cold.

From his breast over the heart protruded the hilt of a small dagger, and it was evident that it had been there many hours. It was the hilt of the same dagger that had killed Dr. Crystal.

The attendants in the house were easily captured; and then the rooms were ransacked from top to bottom in the search for Zanoni, and for other possible victims

for the doctor's knife, which he had boasted of possessing.

None were discovered, however; nor was there any trace of Zanoni anywhere.

When the party had composed itself as comfortably as possible, Chick drew his beloved chief aside and told him the story of their search and explained why it had progressed so rapidly and accurately.

He gave everything in detail while Nick Carter listened silently.

And when he explained about the light which had shown them the way to the house, he concluded by saying:

"I think it must have been Zanoni."

"Yes," said Nick, "it was Zanoni."

"We will search for her and find her as soon as we have daylight," said Chick.

"Nay, lad, I will search for her alone, for I alone can find her. Keep the men around you here, and if you hear me calling strange names outside the house, pay no attention and never ask me to explain."

When the first glimmer of daylight appeared Nick Carter left the house, and as soon as he was a little distance from it, he began to call, softly at first, and then with steadily increasing volume:

"Lady Mary! Lady Mary, Lord Algy wants you!"

And calling like this he wandered slowly the length of that strange valley, arriving at last to a place where far up against the side of the cliff there was a small aperture through the rocks to the open sea; and there he saw her.

She was standing facing him, and far above him; yet they could easily see and hear each other; and they were far removed from the others.

"What do you want with me, Algy?" she asked softly from her perch. You see, they were still keeping up the farce.

"Zanoni is dead, is she not, Lady Mary?" he asked, as softly.

"Yes, dead; quite dead."

"And Lady Mary—what of her?"

She turned from him for a moment and peered out through the fissure upon the open sea; then she resumed her former position, and replied:

"Go back with your ships and your friends and leave me here."

"No," he replied. "That would be cruel. You would starve."

"Then look!" she cried.

She held out her hands toward him for a moment as if she would embrace him, even from that distance; and then, turning swiftly and without another word, she sprang through the fissure in the rocks and disappeared.

Nick Carter remained there more than an hour, watching that small fissure in the rocks; but at last he turned away with a deep sigh, and rejoined Chick.

"Zanoni is dead," he said. "We will not search for her."

Dr. Quartz's body was taken far out upon the open sea, tied and sewed inside a shotted hammock, and dropped into the depths.

THE END.

Next week's issue, 421, will contain "Zanoni, the Transfigured; or, Nick Carter's Phantom Mascot."

Beginning with the next week the readers of this weekly will find that the stories are increased over one-third in length. This is in response to a general demand to have the stories issued oftener than once a week. It is impossible to do that, but we have made the stories longer to show our appreciation of the favor with which our readers have received them. With the increased length there will be no change in the price of the weekly and no lowering of the quality of the stories. After this our readers may be certain that they are getting the longest as well as the best stories of their kind published.

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